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ABSTRACT

This discussion reviews the major changes that have taken place in higher education since the end of World War II and discusses the various stages or phases that reflect changing demands and expectations. The stages are identified as: (1) 1946-1958, readjustment and educational opportunity; (2) 1958-1964, excellence and equality; (3) 1964-1972, access and equity; (4) 1970-1982, reform and renewal; (5) 1983-1996, pluralism and diversity; and (6) 1996-2007, quality, diversity, and accountability. This discussion of the stages of continued development and waves of reform includes no denials of "arrested development" or "tidal waves and undertow." In spite of all the difficulties of the past and present, commendable progress has been made in higher education. The systems of higher education at national, regional, and state levels now differs significantly from those of 1946, 1964, 1983, or 1982. (SLD)

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Continuing Development of Higher Education

IHE Perspectives

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CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

by Cameron Fincher

In 1946 thousands of World War II veterans enrolled in colleges on the "GI Bill". In 1950 American colleges and universities conferred more degrees than in any previous year. After completing their undergraduate, graduate, or professional degrees, many WWII veterans remained "oncampus" and taught several generations of students who were the children and grandchildren of former soldiers, seamen, and marines.

Looking back, it is tempting to view the post-war years as halcyon days in which the advantages and benefits of higher education were extended to deserving veterans and many others who sought knowledge, competence, and experience to cope with the rapid changes taking place in the world around them. A more realistic view of the postwar years would indicate that institutions of higher education were not well prepared to admit and instruct hundreds of servicemen, but they did indeed readjust policies, programs, and practices to accommodate veterans and other students who were mature beyond their years.

Eighteen years later, in 1964, the children of post-war marriages entered college and within a few brief but frantic years, disassociated themselves from older generations and demanded benefits that were more immediate, more direct, and more relevant. They, too, found the nation's colleges and universities unprepared to meet a younger generation's learning needs and interests. Instead of the "readiness to improvise" (for which WWII veterans were noted), sons and daughters in the next generation demanded radical changes in the ways they were advised, taught, examined, and graded. Their protests attracted national coverage by the news media—and national discussion in the corridors of Congress and state legislatures.

In the continuing development of higher education throughout the next three decades, there were numerous perennial issues, frequent references to institutional effectiveness and a national awareness that reform was needed. Recurrent emphasis was based on basic skills as terms like "developmental education" raised the hopes of parents and the general public but not the achievement levels of children in school. Detours into teaching styles and learning strategies boosted the morale of participants but never the critics. Numerous changes were made to cope with the different demands and expectations of a generation of "baby-boomers" who were unwilling to be bound by the habits, beliefs, and values of "adults over thirty" years of age.

The purpose of this discussion is to review briefly the major changes that have taken place in higher education since the end of World War II—and to discuss the various stages or phases that reflect changing demands and expectations. With the understanding that many changes take place simultaneously in complex systems such as colleges and universities, six fairly distinct stages can be identified in the continuing development of colleges and universities. The choice of titles for each stage is open to

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debate—in the same way that the choice of legislative acts and commission reports, as indicative of each stage, is a matter of judgment. Other titles and other laws could serve as well, perhaps, but they would not have the same intuitive appeal.

READJUSTMENT AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY (1946-1958)

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 was quite influential in creating a climate for the extension of educational opportunity to students who would not otherwise attend college. Over 88,000 veterans were attending college by November 1945, and over 2.2 million veterans attended college in the post-war years. From 1946 through 1949, years in which enrollments increased by seventy-five percent, a majority of male college students were veterans.

The presence of more mature students in their classes required many college instructors to revise their expectations for student achievement Also relevant was the preference of veterans for practical subjects that would increase their employability after graduation. In brief, veterans often proved to be a different kind of student, and college faculty were appreciative of that difference. Instead of "spoon feeding" reluctant learners, classroom instructors were often challenged to actively engage their students in independent study and additional homework.

The process by which change takes place has many developmental features—and "survival of the fittest" is just one of many terms that suggest the role of purpose in changes taking place over a period of time. In institutional growth and development, the process has been identified as "provisional variation and selective retention." The term implies that changes are made with expectations of tentative results and with experience, some results are retained because they serve the user's purposes and other results are not retained.

With the publication of the President's Commission on Higher Education report, the GI Bill received a firm endorsement in the Commission's recommendation that:

> American colleges and universities must envision a much larger role for higher education in the national life. They can no longer consider themselves merely the instrument for producing an intellectual elite; they must become the means by which every citizen, youth, and adult is enabled and encouraged to carry his education . . . as far as his native capacities permit.

Given this change in the national climate of public opinion, the following twenty-five years witnessed what many observers believed to be an era of unexcelled growth and expansion. Veterans had demonstrated that mature adults could learn—and many college instructors observed that the presence of veterans in classrooms was an incentive to younger students to keep pace with older classmates. No better evidence is needed that public demands and expectations were changing and would continue to influence the growth and development of higher education in a democratic society.

EXCELLENCE AND EQUALITY (1958-1964)

The National Defense Education Act of 1958 has been criticized as a hastily enacted and piecemeal response to restore national pride when the Russians launched the first orbiting satellite in what became the "space age". Nonetheless, the NDEA provides another point of departure for the emerging role of the federal government in funding higher education. The intent of such legislation was to strengthen higher education in specific areas of national importance. In the name of national defense, science, mathematics, and foreign languages gained a higher priority, as well as testing, counseling, and guidance in the public schools. This action was in keeping with the "research revolution" then in progress and it funded training programs to relieve national shortages of

qualified personnel in the nation's schools and colleges.

Thus, federal legislation in 1958 provided federal funds to strengthen college courses in crucial disciplines, and the most important implication may have been to recognize higher education as a national resource to be used in the public interest. Together the 1940s and 1950s were indicative of the rapid growth and the optimistic outlook for higher education in general. Critics and cynics were quick to point out that rapid growth and expansion was not free of growing pains, but the prevailing climate of opinion was influenced significantly by John Gardner's book on *Excellence*, the research revolution increasingly called to everyone's attention, and an optimistic outlook that education was indeed "the discovery and development of talent".

ACCESS AND EQUITY (1964-1972)

The third stage of higher education's continuing development was quite different from the stage preceding and the stage following. Whereas the National Defense Education Act had been passed in an effort to recapture national pride, the Higher Education Act of 1965 was passed in response to a "tidal wave of students" that hit college campuses in the fall of 1964. Two years later the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education launched its five-year study of problems and issues calling for reform. Proclaiming equality of educational opportunity as the nation's first priority, the Carnegie Commission issued an extensive series of reports, studies, essays, and recommendations concerning the future direction and development of higher education. Each report and recommendation addressed the nation's policy and decision makers and advocated extensive reform in institutional policy and governance.

Among its earliest recommendations, the Commission advocated a National Foundation for the Development of Higher Education. One of the objectives of the Foundation would be to work with each state in the planning and development of its postsecondary educational system. Efforts would be made to eliminate "all economic barriers" to educational opportunities. Ability, motivation, and individual choice—under this rationale—should be the only determinants of achievement. Each high school graduate should be able to enter a comprehensive, community college somewhere within each system.

Other commissions, whether the Assembly on University Goals and Governance, the HEW Task Force, or the Commission on Human Resources and Advanced Education agreed with the general thrust of the Carnegie Commission recommendations. Different perspectives were introduced in the national debate, however, and many recommendations would fall short in their implementation. Indeed, the years 1968-1972 must be regarded as years of exception to the great majority of policies and plans for continued growth and development. These were the years in which student protests and faculty dissent permitted very few institutions of higher learning to boast of the progress made in academic standards, creative productivity, or high attainment in scholarly research.

REFORM AND RENEWAL (1970-1982)

The Educational Amendments Act of 1972 was conceived and approved in a strikingly different climate of opinion from that of the G.I. Bill and the National Defense Education Act of 1958. The psychological updraft of rapid growth and development was no longer present, student protests incurred no gratitude to veterans home from Vietnam, and a managerial revolution in process extolled efficiency and not effectiveness. Indeed, business interests continued to believe that despite their abundant funding, universities were mismanaged.

Acknowledging that modern business concepts and principles had much to offer academic administrators, it is still difficult to believe that so many colleges adopted corporate planning models without questioning

their usefulness to institutions with entirely different missions. More than a few institutions ran the gamut from planning-programming-budgeting systems to management-by-objective to zero-based budgeting to strategic planning without developing a viable plan for reform or renewal. Other institutions learned that changes in systems, as complex as a college, could have many unanticipated and unwanted outcomes. Still others found that well-intended responses to changing public demands were unsuccessful because public demands and expectations were subject to change.

For avid readers of Carnegie Commission reports, the implementation of one recommendation could lead to adverse effects on other recommendations. At the same time, concessions to students in the name of "student rights" by no means assured the outcomes and results desired by other institutional constituencies. When faculties and students were in accord on controversial issues, observers could often predict accurately that administrators, alumni, and governing boards would not follow their lead. Much to their disadvantage and often to their discomfort, those writing recommendations were far removed from the scene of action and did not have the wisdom of one astute observer who wrote:

> Most of the current publications on higher education overlook the continuing struggle, the repeated crises, the paradoxes, the uncertainties, and the oscillations of development.
>
> (David D. Henry, 1975)

With the benefit of hindsight, many of us now agree that change is a transition from one stage to another and not a radical reorganization from the ground up. Development involves an impetus from within, as in an unfolding process. Process, as determined by public demands and expectations from without, often underestimates the change that takes place from within. Predictable change, therefore, is neither capricious nor inevitable.

PLURALISM AND DIVERSITY (1983-1996)

A new era of commission reports began in 1983 when eight major reports on secondary education recommended extensive reform in the nation's public schools. Other reports followed and placed an even stronger emphasis on the assessment of educational outcomes and the improvement of undergraduate education. In many ways, however, the impetus for reform in the 1980s was enhanced by the different perspectives of associations in closer contact with their constituencies. The points-of-view presented by the American Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (AASCU) complemented those of the American Association of Colleges (AAC) in ways that were educationally informative. In similar manner, the viewpoints of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) complemented those discussed in meetings of the Association of American Universities (AAU).

More important, perhaps, is the constructive criticism that can be found in reports written from broader and more mature perspectives. If previous commission reports were limited by their national perspective, reports and recommendations in the 1980s were more amenable to regional, state, and institutional perspectives. Partially responsible for this advantage was the re-definition of education beyond the high school as private, public, proprietary, and technical postsecondary education.

Other related factors were the statewide planning committees made possible through federal funding, a much needed emphasis on high school and college curricula, teaching-and-learning, and an increasing awareness that education at all levels resulted in both societal and individual benefits. In addition, many changes took place in public perceptions and expectations. No longer taken for granted was "a common culture" for education at all levels and "a unified curriculum" for all colleges. Liberal education, as compared

Waves of Reform and Renewal in Higher Education

(1946-1958) Readjustment and Educational Opportunity:
Passed by Congress at the height of national attention in June 1946, the GI Bill proved to be the most beneficial educational since the Land-grant College Act of 1862. The President's Commission on Higher Education Report (1947) was especially influential in subsequent legislation related to education.

(1958-1964) Excellence and Equality:
Falling behind the Russians in the Space Age, Congress reacted with the National Defense Education Act of 1958 to improve instruction in science, engineering, technology, and foreign languages. Included in the bill were funds for testing, counseling, and guidance in an effort "to discover and develop talent" in the name of national security and pride.

(1964-1972) Access and Equity:
The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Higher Education Act of 1965 . . . and the Educational Amendments Act of 1972; student protests, faculty dissent, and campus violence—followed by an era of Commission, Task Force, and Assembly reports and a managerial revolution in academic administration.

(1970-1982) Reform and Renewal:
Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, Carnegie Council on Policy Studies, and numerous other commissions advocate changes in national, state, and institutions policies related to reform and renewal in higher education. Major emphasis of reports placed on curricular reform, educational professions, developing institutions, and perennial issues.

(1983-1996) Pluralism and Diversity:
A New Era of Commission Reports from leading associations of colleges and universities: American Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (AASCU); National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC); Association of American Universities (AAU); American Association of Colleges (AAC), and others.

(1996-200?) Quality, Diversity, and Accountability:
Associational Studies and Reports from: Educational Commission of the States (ECS); State Higher Education Executives Organizations (SHEEO); and Regional Accrediting Associations; a returning emphasis on quality and diversity issues in the midst of a technological revolution affecting instruction, research, and service as institutional responsibilities.

to general education and to professional or technical education, could be discussed within a context of humanistic or experiential education, adult development, and other "non-traditional" programs of study.

QUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY (1992-2001)

In the 1990s commission reports and recommendations came from yet another group of constituencies. Quality and diversity issues captured the attention of regional accrediting associations, inter-state commissions, and professional associations that revived interest in concepts of accountability.

The curricular tensions of the 1980s became "cultural wars" that were more embarrassing than enlightening, and several perennial issues, such as the meaning and significance of diversity, continued to attract attention that could have been directed much better to other topics. The quest for "unifying themes" was recalled periodically in discussions of "core courses" or the restoration of the humanities to their rightful place in the curriculum. The topics arousing the most interest, however, were the assessment of educational outcomes, the improvement (in general) of undergraduate education, and the cooperation of schools and colleges, of business and higher education, and state government and postsecondary education.

Much to their surprise, many institutions found themselves in another age of competition for students, resources, and degree-granting privileges. As technical schools became technical colleges with the authority to confer associate degrees in technology, four-year colleges lost students to competitors they had not previously recognized. And whenever "virtual universities" gained accreditation in one regional association, they gained access to students in all other regions.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This discussion of stages of continued development and waves of reform includes no denials of "arrested development" or "tidal waves and undertow". Anyone examining closely the growth and development of colleges and universities will find evidence of stunted growth. In similar manner they can find events and processes that are similar to tidal waves and, beyond doubt, they can feel the force of an undertow that holds an institution back.

In the identification of stages of development, nothing more or less is meant than the observation that institutions of higher education have continue to develop through a process of growth from within. All the laws, federal or state, and all the commission reports, cited here, can do nothing more than stimulate, encourage, and facilitate the growth and development of institutions. Without constructive or progressive changes from within, no institution of higher education will become a university with a well-earned reputation. All the planning, coordinating, directing, managing, administering, and leading we can give a university will not suffice—if the institution is severely limited in its "potential for continued development."

In brief, despite all the difficulties of the past and present, commendable progress has been made—and we now have systems of higher education at national, regional, and state levels that differ significantly from what we had in 1946 . . . in 1964 . . . in 1983 . . . and . . . in 1992!

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